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AUTHOR Schwartz, Wendy
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ABSTRACT

This document reviews the following books on urban and minority education: (1) "Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk" (Teun A. van Dijk), which discusses the ways that prejudice and negative stereotypes are conveyed in discourse and then socially reproduced in everyday thought, talk, and action; (2) "American Business and the Public School: Case Studies of Corporate Involvement in Public Education" (Marsha Levine and Roberta Trachtman, Eds.), which presents case studies that provide a good cross-section of local environments, school agendas, and business efforts that can define and help determine the success of the school-business relationship; (3) "Human Rights and Education" (Norma Bernstein Tarrow, Ed.), which contains 13 essays that address both the universal right to be educated, and education abut human rights; (4) "Young, Black, and Male in America: An Endangered Species" (Jewell Taylor Gibbs, Ed.), which contains essays discussing the social and economic plights that beset young, black, mostly urban males; and (5) "Urban Ethnicity in the United States: New Immigrants and Old Minorities" (Lionel Maldonaldo and Joan Moore, Eds.), which contains essays that describe the new immigrant population, indicate how the population has been integrated into existing American society, and assess the impact of new immigrants on institutions and on the areas where they locate. (BJV)

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MORE RECENT LITERATURE ON URBAN AND MINORITY EDUCATION

ERIC/CUE DIGEST NO. 49

by Wendy Schwartz

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MORE RECENT LITERATURE ON URBAN AND MINORITY EDUCATION

The following five books are a cross section of those recently published materials received by ERIC/CUE that cover key issues in our field: the education of urban and minority youth, and their social and cultural environment. They are reviewed here not only because they are important contributions to the subject literature, but because they are not likely to be widely promoted elsewhere.

Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk, by Teun A. van Dijk. Sage Publications (Newbury Park, CA): 1987. 435 pp.

This book presents new insights into the ways that prejudice and negative stereotypes are conveyed in discourse and then socially reproduced in everyday thought, talk, and action. Its analysis is based on interviews, consisting of normal conversation, with white people in Amsterdam, and in San Diego, California.

Van Dijk argues that whites learn about minorities primarily through talk and text—interpersonal communication and the various media. He concentrates here on the former. Racist opinions are frequently formed, and then reinforced, by the comments of in-group members about out-groups. The result is that biased stereotypes, beliefs, and attitudes come to be accepted without question, and, ultimately, passed along within the in-group (in this study, whites of certain ethnicities) without question.

Further, van Dijk demonstrates through quotations from his interviews that the structures and strategic uses of prejudices are very similar in the United States and in different countries of Western Europe. He concludes that "such ethnic prejudices [are] functional in the maintenance of power and privileges of the dominant white majorities in these countries."

By linking the cognitive and social dimensions of prejudice, van Dijk contributes substantially to the understanding of its development. However, as he himself notes, bias is also reproduced and perpetuated through the print and electronic media: thorough studies covering such media influence have yet to be made. It is only when these studies are conducted, and then considered in conjunction with this study of the interpersonal diffusion of racism, that a complete profile of the way prejudice is reproduced can be developed.

American Business and the Public School: Case Studies of Corporate Involvement in Public Education, edited by Marsha Levine and Roberta Trachtman. Teachers College Press (New York, NY): 1988, 278 pp.

The Committee for Economic Development (CED) has been in the forefront of the corporate-school alliance movement, and this collection of case histories is another CED attempt to promote such collaborations.

The case studies—seven comprehensive reports and some additional shorter descriptions—provide a good cross section of local environments, school agendas, and business efforts that can define and help determine the success of the relationship. A list of 16 lessons drawn from the studies, and presented in the Introduction, is a valuable guide for establishing a corporate-school collaboration.

Of particular interest is the Metropolitan Life Insurance study, for Met Life's involvement in education began early in the twentieth century with a public health education campaign. Now the company's education efforts are focused on teachers, to improve the quality of the teaching force and give teachers a greater voice in school improvement efforts.

Because the book only includes success stories, it may encourage unrealistic expectations for these alliances. Moreover, the case studies do not deal with problems encountered on the route to success, possibly because the major case studies were written by employees of the companies under study. Although more evaluation would have enriched the book, the studies are a good departure point for developing new collaborations and reviewing others already operating.

Human Rights and Education, edited by Norma Bernstein Tarrow. Pergamon Press (Elmsford, NY): 1987, 261 pp.

This international collection of essays covers two basic ways that human rights and education connect: the universal right to be educated and education about human rights. The third volume in the Pergamon Comparative and International Education Series, it is intended for educators and policymakers concerned about the way that individual countries adhere to international agreements on education.

The first section of the book, consisting of ten essays, offers a scattershot view of the ways that various countries, both developed and developing, strive to overcome educational discrimination. Of particular interest to Americans is the essay covering multicultural and bilingual education in Canada and Israel, for we share many of the same equity problems. Although both countries have legislated equal education for all, their social structure, which relegates certain ethnic groups to a lower status, their official language policy, which identifies only one language as primary, and their histories of social and economic discrimination all combine to prevent true equity in education.

The second section contains three essays on the teaching of rights—human, political, cultural, and economic. The somewhat lackadaisical approach to such an education in the U.S. is compared with the comprehensive human rights curriculum adapted by the 21 members of the Council of Europe and the human rights education provided by post-war West Germany.

UD 026 731

While it appears from these essays that no country—not even, embarrassingly, the U.S.—has its human rights education agenda completely under control, it is encouraging to learn that even some acutely underdeveloped countries are making good strides.

Young, Black, and Male in America: An Endangered Species, edited by Jewell Taylor Gibbs. Auburn House (Dover, NH): 1988. 377 pp.

If minorities are in general unable to achieve full equality in the United States, black males are especially vulnerable, according to this collection of essays. Written by experts in the field for an audience of professionals, the essays provide a vast amount of distressing information.

Tom E. Larson discusses the high rate of unemployment among black men, tracing it to both recent changes in the economy that have eliminated many entry-level jobs; and demographic shifts that have resulted in inner cities comprised mainly of blacks, and suburbs to which most whites have moved, bringing with them jobs formerly available in urban areas. He also asserts that discrimination has survived the affirmative action programs of the 1970s, further reducing minority job opportunities. In another essay, Barbara Solomon argues that schools fail to prepare blacks for blue collar and technical jobs, a problem compounded by discrimination in trade unions that have historically apprenticed inexperienced workers.

A majority of the essays indicate that the problems of black men began long before they were ready to work. Dysfunctional home lives—the result of cycles of poverty, unemployment, poor education, and public assistance policies that exacerbate rather than alleviate these problems—create an environment that subverts self-esteem and ambition and encourages antisocial reactions to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.

The two final essays, by Barbara Solomon and Jewelle Taylor Gibbs, offer a wide range of policy recommendations. While they call on the government for more substantive and sensitive support, they also are specific in their demands of private agencies, churches, and the community. In refusing to exempt any constituency from helping improve the life chances of black men, the authors assert that they do this is not only because all segments of society have helped create the problems, but because eventually none will be able to escape their consequences.

Urban Ethnicity in the United States: New Immigrants and Old Minorities, edited by Lionel Maldonado and Joan Moore. Sage Publications (Newbury, CA): 1987. 304 pp.

Over the last 25 years the composition of immigrants to the United States has changed dramatically, from primarily European to Latin American and Asian. That U.S. institutions and policies have not taken adequate account of this shift informs this collection of essays by experts in the social sciences.

The essays in the first section of the book describe the new immigrant population and indicate how it has been integrated into existing American society. More families are immigrating now, frequently with school-age children. In his essay, Philip Garcia particularizes this and other facts, discussing Los Angeles' experience, where immigrants from certain backgrounds live in various inner city pockets, segregated from longer term residents and from other immigrant groups. Urban school districts that might have been naturally integrated now have predominantly minority populations, the result of white flight, and desegregation efforts are hampered by the desire of individual immigrant groups to remain together.

The second section covers the impact of new immigrants on institutions and on the areas where they locate. Ricardo R. Fernandez and William Velez discuss the problems of educating immigrant children, focusing on the high dropout rate of Hispanics. They cite several common practices (such as tracking and segregation) and new trends (such as minimum competency testing) that negatively affect students' opportunities for achievement and career preparation, and further assert that emphasis on bilingual programs denies other immigrant students, whose academic problems are not language based, access to programs that would help meet their own needs.

The book concludes with an essay by Steven P. Erie that traces the political integration of earlier immigrant groups in an effort to explain the assimilation difficulties faced by current immigrants. He believes that equal opportunity in its broadest interpretation can occur only when these immigrants are able to gain political power.

—Wendy Schwartz

ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education
Institute for Urban Minority Education
Box 40
Teachers College, Columbia University
New York, NY 10027
(212) 678-3433
Erwin Flaxman, Director
Wendy Schwartz, Managing Editor

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